

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

RECOGNIZING CHRISTOPHER
STROUP FOR ACHIEVING THE
RANK OF EAGLE SCOUT

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 25, 2003

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Christopher Stroup, a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 247, and in earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Christopher has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Over the twelve years Christopher has been involved with scouting, he has earned 33 merit badges and has held numerous leadership positions, serving as patrol leader and den chief. Christopher is also a member in the Order of the Arrow and the Tribe of Mic-O-Say.

For his Eagle Scout project, Christopher planned the design, obtained the needed materials, and constructed storage cabinets for the science department of Oak Park High School in the North Kansas City School District.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Christopher Stroup for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 1,
MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG,
IMPROVEMENT, AND MOD-
ERNIZATION ACT OF 2003

SPEECH OF

HON. DENNIS MOORE

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 21, 2003

Mr. MOORE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to oppose this legislation. This is a very difficult vote for me, as I have worked for years to add a prescription drug benefit to Medicare. I have had little more than 24 hours to examine this 676-page conference report, but what I know about H.R. 1 is this: seniors will pay dearly for a weak benefit that undermines their traditional Medicare benefits.

The benefit provided to seniors under H.R. 1 is very weak and does not even take effect until 2006. What insurance plan on earth, except one designed by Congress, would create a "donut hole" that is designed specifically to stop coverage for seniors when they need it? I believe that American seniors will rebel when they find out what Congress is offering them, especially if they compare it to the benefit that Members of Congress themselves receive. This conference report asks seniors to pay a monthly premium of \$35, which is in addition to their existing Medicare premium (\$66.60 per

month in 2004). Additionally, seniors will pay the first \$250 of their drug costs each year, after which Medicare would then start paying 75% of drug costs. But as seniors' drug costs increase, the benefit disappears. When total annual drug costs reach \$2,250, government support would stop. Seniors would be responsible for the next \$2,850 in drug costs. Only when their drug bill for the year reached \$5,100 would Medicare begin paying 95% of all further costs.

This, Mr. Speaker, is the infamous "donut hole" into which thousands of unexpected seniors will fall each year. In their effort to create legislation that seems to cover every senior, but actually does not, this legislation eliminates coverage when seniors need help paying for drugs. Even worse, this gap increases to over \$5,000 by the year 2013.

Seniors will be angry—justifiably—when they begin to understand this donut hole and the deceptive nature of the drug benefit. They might ask why it is there. Some will answer that it was necessary in order to fit the benefit inside the \$400 billion budget. This is true, but only because this legislation does not take any action to address the high cost of prescription drugs.

A more generous benefit could have been created for seniors had the Republican leadership chosen to take some action to increase the affordability of prescription drugs. Under the conference report, the Secretary of Health and Human Services is prohibited by law from leveraging the buying power of 40 million Medicare beneficiaries to get drugs at lower prices for Medicare, just as the Veterans Administration does for 25.8 million American veterans, including 252,791 veterans in Kansas. Secretary of HHS Tommy Thompson told me two days before the vote that he would gladly exercise authority to negotiate lower prices if he had it. But the bill specifically denied him that authority. Many people covered by insurance are able to get a better price due to the fact that they can band together and demand discounts from manufacturers.

Additionally, this conference report fails to allow seniors to reimport medicine from industrialized countries where drugs are significantly cheaper. This despite the fact that a majority of the House approved this concept in passing H.R. 2427, the Pharmaceutical Market Access Act, by a bipartisan vote of 243–186, on July 25, 2003. H.R. 1 contains a provision allowing Canada-only reimportation, but added a "poison pill" requiring the Secretary of HHS to certify reimportation—something that Secretary Thompson has repeatedly said he will not do. Americans should not have to travel to Canada to obtain reasonably priced drugs that in many cases were developed in part with U.S. tax dollars by U.S. companies and manufactured in U.S.-certified facilities. This policy would save American seniors significantly over the next ten years, and remove the unfair situation in which American seniors often pay double or even more for the same drugs than seniors in other industrialized nations.

The legislation includes several other objectionable provisions. The provisions allowing for

premium support will undermine the Medicare program. Although promoted as a "demonstration," up to 7 million beneficiaries could be forced to participate starting in 2010. Under premium support, private plans will be allowed to offer health and drug benefits to attract low-cost young and healthy seniors from Medicare, leaving older and sicker seniors behind. The seniors left in Medicare will see their costs rise, forcing more seniors out of the program. This is called by some the "Medicare death spiral," and it is proof that the conference report puts the profits of pharmaceutical and insurance companies ahead of the needs of our seniors and the disabled.

The H.R. 1 conference report contains drastic cuts to our nation's cancer care system. This legislation will deprive America's cancer care system of \$1 billion a year. A cut like this will be devastating to cancer care. If this happens, many cancer centers will close, others will have to admit fewer patients, and still others will lay off oncology nurses and other critical support staff. Legislation intended to increase access to prescription drug coverage will do the opposite for cancer patients, reducing their ability to get needed cancer care.

Mr. Speaker, today I am forced to vote against this flawed bill, despite the fact that this legislation includes important payment increases for Medicare providers. I regret that these needed payments were included in this legislation in order to build support for this inadequate benefit. I have long supported adequate funding for Medicare providers in Kansas, and I have supported legislation in this Congress and previous Congresses that would erase the cuts approved in the 1997 Balanced Budget Act. Additionally, I signed as a cosponsor of H.R. 3549, introduced by Rep. Baron Hill, legislation that would provide payment increases for doctors, hospitals, home health providers and others who need and deserve adequate Medicare payments. These provisions were included in the larger H.R. 1 and should be enacted now, separately.

If this legislation, despite its great flaws and incomplete benefit, is signed into law, I will continue to fight for needed changes. And I will do all that I can to ensure that the Medicare prescription drug benefit represents what seniors need and expect.

INTRODUCTION OF H. CON. RES. 330

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 25, 2003

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, yesterday my good friend from Connecticut, Rep. CHRISTOPHER SHAYS, and I introduced H. Con. Res. 330, The International Human Rights Equality Act. I would like to specially thank my good friend from Massachusetts, Rep. BARNEY FRANK, and my good friend from Ohio, Rep. DENNIS KUCINICH, for their support at our press conference yesterday on the occasion of the introduction.

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